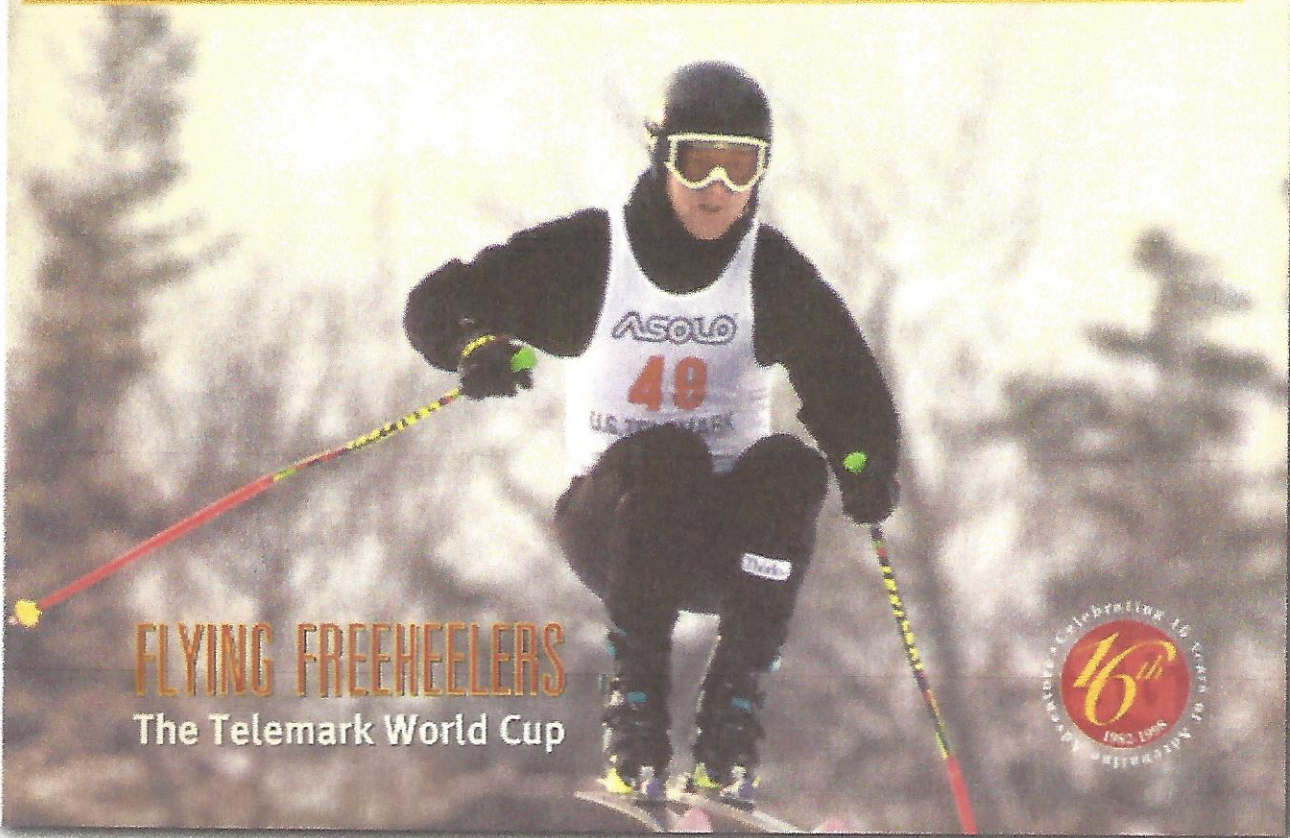


SPORTS GUIDE

Volume 16 Issue 2

OUTDOOR RECREATION, FITNESS & TRAVEL FOR THE WEST

February 1998



FLYING FREEHEELERS
The Telemark World Cup



GO TELE ON THE MOUNTAIN

THE GREAT AMERICAN TELEMARX FESTIVAL & TELEMARX WORLD CUP FINALS

BY SCOTT MCGEE PHOTOS BY BILL STEVENSON

Standing behind the starting wand, you can see the first five gates. You have memorized what lies beyond the rollover. Four rhythmic gates, a sweeping delay gate, and ten gates into a flat and off the jump. Twelve more gates to the “noose,” and five after that to the 60 second uphill skate to the finish. This isn’t your standard alpine race course, it’s a telemark race. Your countdown starts: “Racer Ready,” — half question, half command — “5,4,3,2,1, Go!”

You lurch forward, getting the most push out of your poles, as you let your feet trigger the wand at the last possible instant. A couple of skates get you up to a reasonable speed, and you telemark around the first gate. Time becomes a blur. Things you know to do just seem to happen, without conscious thought.

You look ahead you set up for the delay, keeping your turns round and fluid, you come into the jump fast and fearlessly, launching with explosive spring, and landing in a telemark, ready for the gates ahead. You push away thoughts of technique, distractions from the task at hand, and “Just Ski!”

You anticipate the noose, swooping in to carry all the speed you can, skating around and out into the final turns ahead. Arcing wide around the last gate, you carry speed into the uphill, a great advantage in the skate. Pumping hard on empty arms, legs and lungs, you charge toward the finish, rounding the last corner, you drive down the home stretch, pushing all the way.

In the finish, still gasping for breath, you smile inside at the rush of adrenaline, the feeling of greatness, and the state of focused concentration that got you, or you got, coming down the course. As your heart rate returns to normal, you realize you made it and probably did alright. Up until now, you haven’t cared or at least haven’t let on, even to yourself. It’s not really how you compare to others anyway, but how your performance compares with your last, or your next. Then you’ll have another chance to blot out that small shadow of a doubt — that perhaps you could have gone a little faster.



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The telemark turn is historically the oldest ski turn. From the time that Sondre Nordheim, father of telemark, hiked up the hill and skied down to catch air off of his barn, turning on skis has become an increasingly popular sport.

After telemark skiing experienced its modern rebirth in Utah and Colorado in the 1970s, telemark racing became recognized as a way to perfect the turn and have fun at the same time. Since then, telemark has become a World Cup sport, recognized by the Federation Internationale de Ski (FIS), and enjoys participation by close to 20 nations.

This year the 1998 World Cup Races will be held here in Utah. The five official races will be held at Snowbird and Park City (see schedule below), and include Giant Slalom, the Classic and, this year's new event, the Classic Sprint. Telemark Giant Slalom is much like an alpine GS, only with a jump in the middle, with a one second penalty for not clearing the minimum distance line. Telemark is unique in this respect; in other gate race events with jumps, the jumps are minimized by pre-jumping, or absorbing at the moment of takeoff, rather than "popping it."

The Classic and the Classic Sprint bear striking resemblance to one another, but the Sprint is two runs, and shorter than the one-run Classic. Both races entail GS and Super G gates, at least one big air jump, one or two "nooses," which are 360 banked turns, and an uphill whose duration should equal one-third of the total course time. These Classics are as exciting as they are grueling, and challenge a wide variety of skiing skills in the relatively short clock time of 3-5 minutes. Perhaps it's no wonder those lithe and born-on-ski Norwegians do so well.

1998 Telemark Masters World Championships will be held alongside the FIS races, and are open to racers over 30, who obtain competitor's licenses from their National Ski Federations. Master racers vary from former World Champions to Telemark racers who are new to the sport. "It's fun just to be racing with skiers from so many different cultures," said one US veteran of Telemark Masters.

The Great American Telemark Festival will be rounded out by the multi-various other activities available to the spectator or telemarking public. Telemark academy, telemark powder 8s, bump contest, ski jumping, cross country skiing, skating, guided tours, backcountry workshops, and heli-tele tours are all offer-

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ings worth tuning into for fun, competition or skill honing after the races. Local and national sponsors will be present, with demo gear and manufacturers displays at most events.

There will be other events planned as part of the Great American Telemark Festival. Some of them will be skiing events and others will be winter recreational activities. The social gatherings in the evenings, including receptions, benefit concerts, dinner buffets and apres ski parties, will be open to the public with door-purchase tickets available (banquets excepted - call for reservations). Here, one can rub elbows with the fast and famous, as well as make valuable ski connections for future trips abroad.

Uou'll see people at these events like Hans Gunleiksrud, who came to the United States in 1983 to study and ski at BYU. I first met Hans at the top of Snowbird's training hill, when boots were leather, and skis were skinny. He got me into the gates and offered my one of my first pointers for racing: "You know in diagonal stride, how the opposite hand and foot are leading? So it is with telemark, until you learn to face across your downhill ski in the heart of the turn."

His words held the wisdom of ages, and soon I was skiing with better edging and control. Soon he had me keeping my hands in front, still facing over the downhill ski, and ski harder, faster and better than before. My skiing improved, as did my desire to race and ski more and more difficult terrain.

Later that year, Hans was to be the US National Champion, in GS, Classic and moguls, pulling a 'heli-tele' in the final round to take the crown. His racing had served him well, and now it was time to move on.

Hans moved back to Norway after school and a couple of years of racing in Utah and abroad. He soon became the coach of the Norwegian Telemark Team, whilst upholding other duties for the Norwegian national sports federation. He was coaching, officiating, and still winning Masters races through the 1996 World Championships.

He now works for Nike Europe in Amsterdam, and is still enthusiastic about telemark racing. Recent rumors suggest that Hans will be seen at the TeleFest in March. "Ya! We'll see you there!" he would say.



Without a doubt, the Great American Telemark Festival (GATF) will be one of the biggest and best telemark displays ever in the history of U.S. telemark racing. With 200 competitors from 20 different countries participating, this happening is sure to set a new standard in world class telemark events. And if successful in one of its hopeful ulterior motives, some of the same athletes will return here for the Salt Lake City 2002 Winter Olympics.

Telemark racers and organizers have long dreamed of Olympic status for this most graceful, well-rounded and demanding of winter sports. Unlike the easy shoo-in that snowboarding experienced, with its high-dollar sponsorships and market boom, telemark has been meticulously compiling the evidence in its favor to push for Olympic recognition in 2002.

As host of the 2002 Olympic Games, Salt Lake City is in a unique position to

host race events of this magnitude. The host is permitted to choose a "Cultural Event" (formerly demonstration sport) for introduction at the Games. Wasatch Telemark has approached the Salt Lake Olympic Committee (SLOC) about the inclusion of telemark skiing in the Games, and SLOC members have expressed interest in telemark skiing and the possibilities it holds.

At the national level, the United States Telemark Ski Association (USTSA) has contacted USOC representatives, and internationally, the Telemark Committee of the Federation Internationale de Ski (FIS) has been working to persuade the International Olympic Committee (IOC) of telemark's readiness and viability as an Olympic event. Hopefully, this three pronged approach will provide telemark's Olympic pursuit with some purchase.

The jury is out on the outcome of this initiative, but this event should draw together the most important and influential people who can make or break this sport's hopes for a berth aboard the Winter Games boat of 2002. Meanwhile, athletes near and far ready themselves for the upcoming races, chasing the imaginary ghost of a retired Norwegian telemark champion.

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GREAT AMERICAN TELEMARX FESTIVAL

1998 FIS Telemark World Cup Finals

1998 Telemark Masters World Championships

- March 21 Sprint Classic FIS and Masters World Championships at Snowbird
- March 22 Free Heel Fly In - UT Winter Sports Park
- March 23 Telemark Giant Slalom at Snowbird
- March 25 FIS Classic and Masters Classic at Park City
- March 26 FIS Telemark GS and Masters GS at Park City
- March 27 Telemark Bumps or Powder 8Æs at Alta
- March 28 FIS Sprint Classic (Dual) at Park City
- March 29 Single Pole Dual SL and Masters The Canyons




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Evolution Ski Company, Salt Lake-based makers of high-performance hand-crafted alpine and telemark skis, will again be sponsoring US Telemark racers in their bids for National and World Cup standings. Evolution has been a longstanding sponsor of telemark events locally, regionally and nationally, and has an adept eye for winners, sponsoring 1992 National Champion Ellen Guthrie of Salt Lake City, and the last American to stand on the World Cup podium, Halsey Hewson of Jackson Hole, who won third in the GS in Lillehammer in 1995.

Wasatch Telemark has been putting on telemark races since 1979 (or earlier), and is the longest running telemark series in the United States, and possibly the world. The US National Championships were hosted in Salt Lake by Wasatch Telemark in 1988 and 1992. Wasatch Telemark incorporated as a non-profit in 1996, and organized under a new, more comprehensive structure.

In addition to fostering the growth of national and international athletes through US Telemark sanctioned races, Wasatch Telemark upholds tradition with events that by now have a long track record. The ski-patrol-inspired Alta Groundhogs Day is now in its 17th year, and the annual Alta bump contest will become part of the GATF this March. The fun is still fast and furious, and free skiing and apres ski awards party hark back to days gone by.

To join US Telemark as a supporting member, or get a competition license, call 801-467-8766, and leave your name, address, phone number and how you heard about USTSA. You will be added to the US Telemark mailing list and receive a newsletter and a membership application within a week or two.

For further information, call or write Maurine Bachman, Wasatch Telemark Association, PO Box 520338, Salt Lake City UT 84152; 801-WLL-TELE (955-8353), Fax: 801-359-0143; Web Sites: Wasatch Telemark: <http://www.saltlake.net/~telemark> or US Telemark: <http://www.Telemarque.com> 

J. Scott McGee is an active telemark racer, a PSIA Examiner/Clinician for track and nordic downhill, and a telemark and alpine instructor at Solitude Ski Resort. He is also currently the president of the US Telemark Ski Association, based in Salt Lake City.

